

Key|Smart review

by MARK ROSENGARTEN on MAY 14, 2014

{ 24 comments }



There's a great thing about being a teacher...being entrusted with a large number of keys. Keys to my classrooms, to the different cabinets in the classroom, my desk, my filing cabinets, cabinets in different rooms, the bathroom and the goggle cabinet. I teach chemistry and there are a large number of cabinets I need to be able to access. Keeping the 11 keys I use for work on a traditional keychain has worn out the pockets in my pants for the last quarter of a century. When the opportunity to review a solution that might spare my poor pockets, I pounced on it.



The Key|Smart is on the left, in blue. the Key|Smart Extended is on the right, in red. There are several ways these can be configured, I configured them to work with my specific school keys. Each small pouch to the right of each Key|Smart contains eight spacers and two extension adapters. Each one also comes with a small key ring that can be attached to the end of the assembled Key|Smart.

Assembly was not intuitive but fortunately Key|Smart has a short how-to video on their site that helped to explain how to assemble the unit. The rings do not act as washers, as one might think, but rather as spacers to keep things level from side to side as you build your stack of keys.



First, unscrew the two screws that hold the two sides together and set them aside. You can use the extenders if you want to have a thicker stack of keys. I used the extender on both sets so I could fit maximum keys. You can customize the arrangement of keys to make it into whatever you want.. The Key|Smart comes with two blank keys to show you how the thing fits together but I put those keys aside.



Here I am starting the shorter unit. I used this to store my three room keys. The longer one I used for my cabinet, desk and filing cabinet keys.



I used the spacers to keep equal space on either side of the Key|Smart as I built the stack. In the smaller unit I alternated the keys left and right and put in spacers on the opposite side. Here you can see the attachment point for the keychain on right side, and a spacer is on the left to keep it all even before screwing the whole thing together.



Here is the longer Key|Smart as assembly nears completion.



This is the assembly screw. Notice the black rubber gasket? This makes the whole thing stay together securely and prevents the screw from coming loose as you swivel keys back and forth within the unit.



And now the assembly is complete! Notice four keys on either side? I chose to put the shorter keys on this Key|Smart so they can all fit flush inside the unit, much like an Allen key wrench set. I didn't need to use more than one spacer when putting this together.



Here is the small Key|Smart assembled. Notice the three spacers between the keys on the right side? This was to allow for even spacing on that side with the other key on the left side.



Now here are both Key|Smarts next to each other, fully fanned out so that you can see what it can hold. The loop is also in place. The keys glide in and out smoothly, with a little resistance that holds the other keys in place while you swivel out the one you want. The keys stay put for the most part when shaken. You can adjust the tension to your taste. The rubber gasket on the screw makes this possible.



Here you can see that the longer Key|Smart doesn't need spacers because of the way the keys fit in so well!



So, how does this compare to tools you might use every day? The smaller one is smaller than a small Swiss Army knife (the one in the photo is the one I used in Boy Scouts 33 years ago) and the longer one is about the same size as the Swiss Army knife. A Victorinox Multitool is placed next to it for comparison. When assembled with the expanders in place, the small one

measures 2 7/8" (73mm) long by 5/8" (11mm) wide by 1/2" (13mm) deep. Your real width will vary depending on the size of the keys you put into it. The longer one measures the same width and depth but is 3 1/2" (82mm) long.

How does it feel in the pocket? Like there's nothing there. Nothing to get caught, nothing to dig in the leg, nothing to tear at the fabric of the pocket. Using the keys is going to take a little getting used to because the mechanics are a little different than you might be accustomed to but it's really no problem. I really appreciated the nicely organized setup that allowed me to use my keys without them all getting tangled up in each other. Sure, you can't put keys between alternate fingers to make a makeshift self-defense weapon but I'll take the compact organizational heaven that this thing creates in my pocket.

Each Key|Smart is available in 7 different colors. A "Titanium Edition" is also available though it is more expensive at \$59. The regular Key|Smart is \$23 and the Extended Key|Smart is \$25. Additional extension rods cost \$2 per pair with additional spacers. Other accessories include lightweight key blanks and a USB memory stick that can be installed directly into the Key|Smart.